

## Naive Metaphysics

Fine, Kit

DOI:

[10.1111/phs.12092](https://doi.org/10.1111/phs.12092)

License:

Other (please specify with Rights Statement)

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Fine, K 2017, 'Naive Metaphysics', *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phs.12092>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

### **Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Fine, K. (2017), Naive Metaphysics. *Philosophical Issues*, 27: 98-113. doi:10.1111/phs.12092, which has been published in final form at 10.1111/phs.12092. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

### **General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

### **Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

## Naive Metaphysics

Metaphysics has two central concerns. One is with the nature of things, with what they are like; and the other is with reality, with what there is. Thus, as metaphysicians, we might wish to know about the nature of space-time - whether it is substantival, say, or purely relational, - or about the nature of universals - whether they are somehow dependent upon particulars, say, or completely separate from them; and we might also wish to know whether space and time really exist or whether there really are universals in addition to particulars. There are, of course, other lines of enquiry - and even other branches of philosophy - that are interested in the nature and reality of things, but metaphysics is principally distinguished from them by the relative generality of its concerns and by the relative a prioricity of its methods. It is only interested in the nature or reality of things broadly conceived and only to the extent that they can be discerned by a priori means.<sup>1</sup>

We therefore arrive at a traditional distinction within metaphysics between *ontology*, which is concerned with what there is, and what one might call *metaphysics proper*, which is concerned with the nature of what there is.<sup>2</sup> I wish, in this paper, to argue that this traditional division in the subject-matter of metaphysics is misguided and the connection between its two branches misconceived and that it should be replaced by a different division of the subject matter - into what I call *naive* and *foundational* metaphysics - and by a different conception of how the two branches are connected. If I am right, then a good deal of metaphysical enquiry has labored under a false or unduly limited view of what the questions of metaphysics are and of how they are to be answered and it is only by reconfiguring the metaphysical landscape that we can obtain a proper view of how the subject should be pursued.

### §1 The Traditional View

The traditional view, as I have called it, is characterized by an innocent reading of ontological claims (where the opposite of ‘innocent’ will turn out not to be ‘sinful’ but ‘sophisticated’). A positive or ‘realist’ ontological position, on this view, is a claim to the effect that there are objects of a certain sort. Thus a realist position on sets is a claim to the effect that there are sets.

A positive position within metaphysics proper, on the other hand, will be a universal claim to the effect that the objects in question are all of a certain sort. Thus a positive position on the nature of sets might state that they are all abstract or all dependent upon their members.

A positive ontological position on objects of a certain class will leave open what they are like. So, given that there are sets, there will still arise a sensible question as to whether they are abstract, say, or dependent upon their members.

By contrast, a negative ontological position on objects of a certain class would not appear to leave open what they are like. Granted that there are no sets, it does not seem to be sensible to ask

---

<sup>1</sup>The ideas behind this paper were first developed in the early 1980's and have been extracted from the third chapter of an as yet unpublished book on metaphysics, the first chapter being partly written up in Fine [2012] and the second in Fine [2001]. It is not essential but the reader may find it helpful to read the present paper in conjunction with the other two papers. I am grateful to \*\*\*

<sup>2</sup>I have in mind here a fairly recent tradition within analytic philosophy. I make no claims about its intellectual pedigree.

what they are like. In so far as any universal claim about the nature of sets is correct, it will, like any such claim, be vacuously true; and so there will be no point in assenting to one such claim over any other.

This might appear to suggest that we first settle the ontological question, of whether there are objects of certain class, and only then go on to consider the question of what they are like, should the answer be positive. I do not wish to maintain that this methodological picture is mistaken but it is certainly not forced upon us. For perhaps we can ascertain what the objects of the given class are (or must be) like antecedent to determining whether they are any such objects; and our answer to the first question might then be relevant to establishing a negative answer to the second question, since it might be evident, or at least plausible, that there are (or could be) no objects of this sort. Arguments of this kind have been used, for example, to establish that there are no colors (since they attribute to the external world what properly belongs to experience) or that there are no moral properties (since they are meant to be both objective and action-guiding). A positive answer to the first question might also be relevant to establishing a *positive* answer to the second question. For it might be plausible, given what the objects of the given class are like, that there is no real impediment to there being such objects.

So, from a methodological point of view, each of the two branches of metaphysics is capable of informing the other. However, there remains a sense in which ontology is prior. For *once* we have established a negative answer to the ontological question, we cannot sensibly raise the question of what the objects of the given class are like.

This view, reasonable as it might appears, is fundamentally mistaken, I believe, in how it conceives of the two branches of metaphysics and of the connection between them; and I now wish to suggest an alternative, more plausible, conception of ontology, which provides us with a quite different division of the subject-matter of metaphysics and a quite different conception of how its two branches are related.

## §2 An Alternative View

On my view, when we ask an ontological question, we are typically asking, not whether there are objects of a certain sort, but whether those objects are real. And the question of whether they are real is, in its turn, the question of whether they figure in reality, i.e., of whether truths about such objects should be stated in giving a complete description of how things really are. More formally, there is a sentential operator ‘It is the case in reality’ and, in saying that numbers are real, for example, we are saying that for any number  $n$  there is some truth  $\phi$  concerning  $n$  for which it is the case in reality that  $\phi$ .<sup>3</sup>

Thus, on this view, both a negative a positive ontological position on a certain class of objects will naturally be taken to be universal in form, with the positive position stating that all such objects are real and the negative position stating that no such objects are real; and it will be equally presupposed, in stating either position, that there are indeed objects of the sort in question.

As a consequence, there will no longer be an asymmetry, of the sort we observed before, between ontology and metaphysics proper. For even if we adopt a negative ontological position on

---

<sup>3</sup>This view is developed and defended in Fine [2009]. Certain subtleties of formulation have been ignored as irrelevant to my present concerns.

a certain class of objects, we can still sensibly pursue the question of what they are like. Thus even if we deny the reality of numbers, we may still be willing to admit that there are numbers and so may sensibly pursue the question of whether they exist in space time, say, or are causally inert.

This change in view point, minor as it may seem, has important consequences for how we conceive of the two branches of metaphysics and of the connection between them. For one thing, it should be clear that ontology is now merely one part of a broader discipline. For the question of whether *some* truth concerning an object holds in reality is naturally absorbed into the question of *which* truths hold in reality. One cannot sensibly pursue the one without the other. Thus the issue of ontology becomes the more general issue of realism, not in the narrow sense of whether or not certain objects are real, but in the broader sense of what, in reality, is or is not the case.

We might call this broader branch of metaphysics, to which ontology is properly taken to belong, *foundational* or *critical* metaphysics. It is that part of metaphysics which is concerned with questions of reality, i.e. with how things stand in reality; and we may define it, very loosely, as that branch of metaphysics whose questions turn on what does or does not hold in reality. The rest of metaphysics - which before we called 'metaphysics proper' - we might now call *naive* or *pre-critical* metaphysics. It is that branch of metaphysics which is *not* concerned with questions of reality.

I happen to believe that metaphysics in general is concerned with the nature of things and that questions of reality, in particular, will turn - or turn in part - on the nature of what is taken to be real (Fine [2012]). Thus if numbers are real then this is something that can be seen to lie in their nature (and perhaps also in the nature of what it is to be a number and to be real). On this view, then, both naive and foundational metaphysics will be unified by a common concern with the nature of things. Both will belong to what I previously called 'metaphysics proper', if we take an investigation into what things are 'like' as an investigation into their nature. Thus, on the present view, we will not only have a more expansive view of the branch of metaphysics to which ontology belongs but also a less expansive view of the rest of metaphysics, which will only be concerned with those questions concerning the nature of things that do not involve their reality.

If we identify what is merely the case (without regard to whether it is in reality the case) with appearance, then naive metaphysics will be the metaphysics of appearance while foundational metaphysics will be the metaphysics of reality, with the one concerned to discern the nature of the world as it presents itself to us and the other concerned to discern the nature of the world as it is in itself. Before, the focal point of ontology was existence and the focal point of metaphysics proper was nature or essence. But now: appearance and reality become the respective focal point of the two central branches of metaphysics; existence, as such, disappears from view; and nature or essence become the over-arching concern of each branch.

### §3 Some Methodological Consequences

The present distinction between naive and foundational metaphysics may be understood as a difference in ideology. The formulation of questions and claims in foundational metaphysics will make essential use of the notion of reality and cognate notions, whereas the formulation of questions and claims in naive metaphysics will make no use, or only make inessential use, of such notions. There is, in this very clear sense, a difference in subject-matter between the two branches of

metaphysics.<sup>4</sup>

But this ideological difference in the two branches of the subject comes along, I believe, with a significant epistemological difference. For naive metaphysics will be more or less independent of foundational metaphysics in the sense that we are able, by and large, to pursue questions concerning the nature of things independently of any consideration of whether they are real. In the case of sets, for example, we may investigate the question of whether they are abstract or dependent upon their members quite independently of whether or not we take them to be real. Indeed, part of the *interest* of the ideological difference is that is associated, in this and in other ways, by a corresponding epistemological difference.

I would not want to insist upon the absolute independence of naive metaphysics from foundational metaphysics since I would certainly want to admit that the latter may, in principle, exert some influence on the former. Here is an example (of some interest in itself). One might well think that if an experience belongs to a certain person then the experience by its very nature belongs to that person. Granted that what holds by the nature of certain objects holds of necessity, this then means that if two experiences are co-personal, in the sense of belonging to the same person, then they are necessarily co-personal. One might also find it plausible that persons are not real, that such strange and elusive entities will not be part of the ultimate furniture of the world. This then means that any facts about persons - and facts of co-personality, in particular - should reduce to facts that are not about persons. But one might despair of reducing facts of co-personality to facts not about persons in such a way as to make the relation of co-personality necessary rather than contingent, for such a reduction, it might be thought, would have to proceed in terms of the empirical connections between temporally distant experiences and would therefore make the relation of co-personality contingent upon when those connections hold.

Let us grant that there may in this way arise some kind of conflict between considerations arising from within naive metaphysics and considerations arising from within foundational metaphysics. I would not then want to insist that all the weight should be given to the former and none to the latter. However, it still seems to me that, in such cases, the preponderance of weight should be given to the judgements that arise from within naive metaphysics and that we should be loath to give them up simply because they run into conflict with judgements that arise from within foundational metaphysics. Indeed, the great danger lies in the opposite direction, that in our adherence to certain reductionist views we lose sight of the actual nature of the objects of interest to us.

I have maintained that naive metaphysics is, in an epistemological sense, largely independent of foundational metaphysics. But it also seems to me that there is an asymmetry between them in this regard. Not only is foundational metaphysics not largely independent of naive metaphysics, it

---

<sup>4</sup>There is an interesting question, which I shall not pursue, as to what the cognate notions are and as to whether, in particular, they include the notion of ground. Some philosophers may identify the real with what is ungrounded (Schaffer [2009]) and so presumably, for them, *ground* should be treated as a cognate notion and questions of what grounds should be taken to belong to foundational metaphysics. My own view (implicit in Fine [2001]) is that considerations of ground, when separated from considerations of what is real, properly belong to naive metaphysics rather than to foundational metaphysics. Thus it may be considered part of the nature of a set, quite apart from questions of reality, that its existence is grounded in the existence of its members.

is also largely dependent on naive metaphysics; we cannot sensibly pursue the questions of interest to us within foundational metaphysics without first settling related questions within naive metaphysics. And the reason for this is plain. For in establishing an anti-realist position on a certain topic we need to 'save the appearances'. In the case of anti-realism about persons, for example, we will have to show how the apparent facts about people can be explained or explained away without reference to people. And in establishing a realist position, we would be well advised to show that no alternative anti-realist position is viable. But this means, in either case, that we need to say what the appearances are, what it is that needs to be saved; and this is the provenance of naive metaphysics.

The asymmetry between the two branches suggests a general methodological precept, which is that, in regard to any given metaphysical topic, we should first attempt a naive investigation into the topic and only then attempt a more foundational investigation. This is perhaps not the only way to proceed but it strikes me as the only realistic way to proceed. For progress in philosophy tends to be linear; we proceed step by step and only proceed to the next step once we feel reasonably secure in the steps we have already made (which is not, of course, to rule out the possibility that we might reconsider or reverse some or all of the previous steps). But this suggests, given the relative security of the judgements we make within naive metaphysics, that we should begin there and only then, once we have a reasonably secure view on what the appearances are, proceed to the task of determining what the reality underlying the appearances might be. The one, we might say, is an essential prolegomena to the other.

It is therefore fair to say that, in doing naive metaphysics, we 'bracket' the question of what is real - and in two different but related ways, one ideological and the other methodological. For first, in *asking* the questions concerning the nature of the facts or things, we do not thereby raise the question of whether they are real; and second, in *investigating* questions concerning their nature, we do not go on to consider the question of whether they are real. On both the conceptual and methodological front, we pay little or no attention to the question of reality.

We previously noted that the simplest model for how we should proceed in answering metaphysical questions on the traditional view was that we first settle whether the objects in question exist and, given that they do exist, we then ask what they are like. On the present view, this model is reversed; we first ask what the objects are like and then consider, on the basis of our answer, whether they are real. If, the traditional view is regarded as one in which existence precedes essence, then the present view is one in which essence precedes existence.

#### §4 The Traditional View Reconsidered

I have argued that, under the traditional view, if it is decided that the objects of some given class do not exist then one cannot sensibly raise the question of what they are like; and on this point, I suspect, most philosophers of a traditional persuasion would agree. However, there is a way in which this conclusion might be resisted and in which it might be allowed that even the traditional ontologist should be willing to consider the nature of what does not exist. This concession is of some importance since my own views on the nature of realist/anti-realist views are highly controversial; and it is therefore of interest to see to that the traditional anti-realist is able, in his own way, to reproduce some of the results and methods of the robust anti-realist.

Two attempts to accommodate investigation into the nature of the non-existent may already

have occurred to the reader. For the anti-realist might be willing to admit the possibility of there being objects of the kind in question and so he may sensibly consider the modal question of what, as a matter of necessity, the objects are like. Thus he might say: necessarily, if numbers exist they are not in space or time. Alternatively, he might give a counterfactual construal of such claims. Thus he might say in the case of numbers: if they were to exist then they would not be in space or time.

I do not think the traditional anti-realist should find either response especially congenial. For one thing, he might be unwilling, in many cases, even to allow that the objects in question might possibly exist. The modal question cannot then be sensibly raised (since it has a trivial answer) and the counterfactual question, even if its answer is not trivial, is extremely hard to interpret. Perhaps more to the point, these construals of the question seem not properly to answer to our interests. Even though witches do not exist, we could ask what they would be like if they were to exist. But this is a quixotic question and it is not at all clear how an answer would relate to our interest in the real world. And similarly, one might suppose, if numbers do not exist. We would like the questions of interest to us to engage with the real world and not relate indirectly through engaging with some merely possible world or counterfactual scenario.

I should like to propose a somewhat different route for the traditional anti-realist to take. This turns critically on the special character of appearance for the anti-realist. For, what he takes to be appearance is not the case, but it is not *simply* not the case (just as, for me, reality is not *simply* what is the case). There is something more; and this something more is the appearance of truth. But not mere appearance but wholesale appearance. The quasi-truths of the traditional anti-realist will come, for the most part, with all the trappings of truth, even to the extent that the anti-realist will have the same interest in the quasi-truth as his realist counterpart has in the truth and will conduct an investigation into the quasi-truth in much the same manner in which his counterpart conducts an investigation into the truth. Thus it is not as if there should be two kinds of mathematics, one for the realist and the other for the anti-realist, or two ways to navigate ourselves around the world. Mathematical and empirical enquiry, for the realist and anti-realist, will be largely the same; it is just that they will have a different view as to what it involves.<sup>5</sup>

The question now arises as to how far the appearances extend. To what extent should the anti-realist be willing to admit that there are quasi-truths which should be treated in the same manner as the realist treats truths? And on this question, it is hard to see how one might draw a principled line between a narrowly conceived first order domain and the more philosophical concerns that arise from within the domain.

Surely there is no sharp break, in regard to quasi-truth, between our wanting to say that all numbers can be factored into primes and our wanting to say that they do not exist in space and time. Of course, the one is more problematic than the other. But many mathematical statements are also problematic. Or again, one belongs to mathematics the other does not. But that someone is thinking of the number 3 does not belong to mathematics and yet surely is as much a quasi-truth as the typical

---

<sup>5</sup>Not all forms of anti-realism, under the traditional view, are like this. Thus intuitionism will result in a different mathematics and the intuitionist may have no interest in somehow going along with the concepts and methods of classical mathematics. For this reason, intuitionism, which Dummett regards as a paradigm of anti-realism, does not strike me as being at all typical.

mathematical theorem. There is, it seems, no good basis upon which to restrict the realm of quasi-truth; it extends seamlessly from the most ordinary of statements in a given domain to the most rarefied and philosophical.<sup>6</sup>

If this is right, then it means that the anti-realist can sensibly consider what the objects of a given domain are like in much the same spirit as he considers ordinary first-order questions about the objects. The traditional anti-realist about numbers, for example, wants to adopt an invidious stance on universal claims in number theory. He is willing to say that every number can be factored into primes but not that every number is prime (even though he wants to say, perhaps with a more serious expression on his face, that there are no numbers). But then why should he not, in the same spirit, be willing to say that no number exists in space or time though not that every number exists in space?

Indeed, I do not even see why he should not frame his claims as explicitly about the nature of the objects in question. He will not simply state ‘numbers do not exist in space and time?’ but ‘numbers, by their very nature, do not exist in space and time’. Moreover, his interest in these claims may be much the same - or, at least, structurally similar - to those of the realist. For each will want to ‘save the appearances’, the anti-realist by accounting for their quasi-truth and the realist by accounting for their truth. Reality is beholden to Appearance in much the same way in either case.

If I am right, then the kinds of denial of existence characteristic of traditional ontology do not rule out questions of what the objects in question are like. The traditional anti-realist can still engage in talk of what does not exist, in much the same way as his realist counterpart and for much the same reason, and thereby engage with the real world to the same extent as more ordinary discourse about the objects.

### §5 The Foundationalist Fallacy

The foundationalist fallacy, like the naturalistic fallacy, is not a flaw in reasoning but the failure properly to appreciate a certain distinction. In the naturalistic case, it is the distinction between what is a naturalistic matter, involving no consideration of the normative, and what is a normative matter; and, in the foundationalist case, it is the distinction between what is a naive matter, involving no consideration of fundamental reality, and what is a foundational matter.

We might think of naive metaphysics as operating on the low ground and of foundational metaphysics as operating on the high ground. The foundationalist fallacy then consists in seeing the whole metaphysical landscape as flat. When we should be operating from the high ground and looking down or operating from the low ground and looking up, we find ourselves looking at a completely level landscape, without regard to elevation or contour.

The fallacy has a number of different sources and manifests itself in a number of different ways. Perhaps the main source is the simple-minded version of the traditional view of metaphysics in which the distinction between a naive and a more foundational point of view is made to disappear

---

<sup>6</sup>But what of statements of reality, in the metaphysically robust sense of the term? Surely the anti-realist should not go along with the realist in asserting, or even quasi-asserting, that numbers are real. This might appear to be a problem for my position. But it seems to me that once we take on board the robust notion of reality, the traditional construal of the realist/anti-realist debate should simply be abandoned and the quasi-truths of the anti-realist should simply be taken to be true.



though, even quite apart from the traditional view, there has been a common tendency to focus on the question of appearance or of reality to the exclusion of the other or to see both of them as one.

The fallacy manifests itself in two main ways. One is in the dismissal or distortion of questions within naive metaphysics and the other is the premature consideration of questions within foundational metaphysics. And so let us consider each in turn.

One very crude form of dismissal is when a philosopher simply refuses to consider the question of what something is like on the grounds that it does not exist. Take, for example, the rejection of the Ship of Theseus puzzle in van Inwagen [1990], p. 128, 'There are no ships, and hence there are no puzzles about the identities of ships'. However, van Inwagen is willing to admit in daily life that a ship is sailing into the harbor. But then it is not at clear why, by the same token, he should not be willing to raise questions about where the ship had been at various different times or in various different circumstances; and once he does, the puzzle will arise. He cannot so easily separate his daily concerns with shoes, ships and sealing wax and his more philosophical concerns.

Another form of dismissal arises when the existence of a naive branch of metaphysics is ignored or not even acknowledged. Some recent examples can be found in the work of Sider, Schaffer and Lowe. Thus take the following passage from Sider [2011], p. 1:

Metaphysics, at bottom, is about the fundamental structure of reality. ... Not about what properties are essential ....

Or from Schaffer [2009], p 347:

'... Metaphysics ... does not bother asking whether properties, meaning and numbers exist. ...The question is whether or not they are *fundamental*.'

Or from Lowe ([2002], pp. 2-3):

'its [i.e. metaphysics'] central concern is with *the fundamental structure of reality as a whole*'.

Of course, these philosophers might be willing to acknowledge the existence of what I call naive metaphysics under a different name, but the natural consequence of adopting such a definition is to cut off the study of the foundational metaphysics from that branch of the subject, naive metaphysics, which gives it life and support.

However, questions of naive metaphysics too obviously arise to be so easily dismissed, even if they are not taken to belong to metaphysics proper. What more commonly happens is not that the questions are dismissed but that they become distorted, either in how they are asked or in how they are answered. Consider, for example, the question of whether a material thing is the same as its matter - the statue the same as its clay, say, or a table the same as the wood from which it is made. Many philosophers have wanted to say 'yes' to this question. Now I do not want to insist that they are mistaken. However, I suspect that these philosophers have been largely been influenced by reductive concerns. There is nothing more in the world than the particles from which the statue or the table are made; and how better to ensure such a result than to suppose that the statue and the table are identical to their matter? In this way, any serious question about the nature of ordinary material things gets sidelined and, instead of attempting to see these objects for what they are, it is simply taken for granted that there can be nothing more to them than the matter from which they are composed.

Another example concerns personal identity. The central question here is: what is a person? But this is not usually the question which gets asked. Usually the focus is on finding criteria for the

identity of a person across time - and sometimes, also, across worlds or at a time. Again, I do not wish to question the legitimacy of these questions or the interest of the answers that have been given to them. But it seems to me that, as before, the focus on the particular questions and answers has been largely motivated by reductive concerns. Even since Hume, philosophers have wanted to get rid of the 'self' and the the question of what makes a person the same from one time to the next has appeared to pose a serious challenge to such a view. It has therefore seemed important to provide a purely physical or psychological criterion for identity across time in which all reference to personhood can be seen to disappear.

There has therefore been a tendency to conceive of the issue of identity in the light of these reductive concerns rather than from a more neutral point of view in which the potential difficulties with a purely physical or psychological criterion might have been seen more readily to emerge. But the problem does not simply lie there. For in answering the various questions of identity over time or the like, we do not thereby answer the question of identity with which we began. Take the psychological criterion of personal identity. This only tells us what makes a person at one time the same as a person at another time, but it does not tell us what a person *is*. It is true that the psychological criterion is often associated with bundle theory, according to which a person is simply a bundle of experiences. But this is not the only possible view. The psychological criterion is even compatible with the view that a person is not a bundle but a soul, but one whose experiences are constrained in just the way set out by the criterion. Moreover, the bundle theory faces enormous problems of its own. For one might naturally think that a bundle is necessarily constituted, if at all, by the experiences that actually constitute it. But a person does not necessarily have the experiences he actually has. Nor is it clear, if a bundle is allowed to vary its constitution from world to world, why it should vary in just the way the experiences of a person can vary.

Or take a bodily criterion of personal identity. This is naturally associated with the view that a person *is* his body. But again, this is not the only possible view. Thus the bodily criterion is compatible with the view that a person is the spatio-temporal region occupied by his body. The view also has problems of its own. Under the bundle theory we had no difficulty in saying what it was for a person to *have* an experience. It was simply a matter of the experience *belonging* to the bundle. But what is it for a physical body to have an experience? It is not at all clear that a purely physical body is any more capable of having an experience that a rock or stone or what it might be for it to have an experience if this is indeed possible.

One has the sense, in these and many other cases, that the enquiry into the nature or identity of the objects in question has to a large extent been under-written or shaped by reductive concerns and that there has been a failure to adopt a more neutral perspective, from which a broader range of questions might have been raised and a broader range of considerations might have been seen as relevant to their answer.

Another kind of neglect or distortion arises from the premature pursuit of questions within foundational metaphysics. Since naive metaphysics is not properly recognized as a separate field of enquiry, nor is its relevance to foundational metaphysics. In my own view, the deliverances of foundational metaphysics should represent the terminus of philosophical enquiry; and it is only once we have a good handle on the corresponding questions within naive metaphysics, with how things appear, that we are in any position to form an opinion on their reality (Fine [2001], p. 25).

All too often, philosophers act as if they are equipped with some special metaphysical X-ray

vision by which they might be able to see directly into the fundamental nature of things - as if it should somehow be evident that everything is physical or that there could be no modal facts or that a genuine self, as an object in its own right, should disappear. But holding these views, given the present state of philosophical enquiry, strikes me as absurd in its own way as believing in the atomic theory of matter without the benefit of chemical analysis or, to take an example closer to home, it is as absurd as believing that all mathematics reduces to logic without having a clear conception of what the fundamental concepts or principles of mathematics might be. How can one expect to have a reasonable view of the reality behind the appearance of things until one has a clear overall view of the appearances themselves?

Consider, for example, the question of the reduction of the macro-physical to the micro-physical. Until we have settled the prior question of whether a material thing coincides with its matter, we are not in a good position to settle this further question. For should a thing not turn out to be identical to its matter, then it is no longer clear what the relationship between them might be and whether the relationship between them might create some difficulty for the proposed reduction. Or again, how can a philosopher of an empiricist persuasion be so confident that there is no modality in the world when we have no clear view of how modality might be manifest in capacities or laws, or in counterfactual or modal truths, or in the principles of logic or mathematics?

If this is right, then it is important for philosophers to see the phenomenon of interest to them for what it is, in itself, without regard to whether it is fundamental or real. In doing naive metaphysics we should eradicate any impulse we might have to adjudicate on what is and is not real and simply attend to the phenomenon itself. Or, alternatively, we might imagine ourselves to be thorough-going realists, who take *everything* to be real, since there is then no danger of our anti-realist views getting in the way of our examination of the phenomenon as it is in itself. And it is only after such an enquiry, with the phenomenon clearly in sight, that we are in a position to pursue questions of a more foundational character.

### §6 Some Related Distinctions

The distinction between appearance and reality is hardly new and, in one form or another, had dominated philosophy from the very beginning; and so it may be worth comparing my view on how the appearance/reality distinction manifests itself in metaphysics with some related views of this sort.

Perhaps the distinction that most readily comes to mind is Strawson's between 'descriptive' and 'revisionary' metaphysics. 'Descriptive metaphysics', he tells us (Strawson [1959], p. 9) 'is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world, revisionary metaphysics is concerned to produce a better structure'.

My own distinction differs in a number of ways from his, although the differences may be more in how I would wish to describe the intended distinction than in the distinction itself. Descriptive and revisionary metaphysics, for him, are both meant to be about the structure of our *thought* about the world. But I do not think of it in this way. Naive and foundational metaphysics are only about our thought in so far as our thought is itself one of things that belongs to the world. If I say that ordinary material things are enduring individuals or that they are not real, then I am saying something about the nature of ordinary material things and not about the structure of our thought. This is how we naturally express ourselves and I see no reason to express ourselves in

any other way.

In the second place, the passage from Strawson seems to suggest that the descriptive and the revisionary metaphysician are rivals. The descriptive metaphysician is presumably 'content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world' because he thinks that it is alright as it is, while the revisionary metaphysician 'is concerned to produce a better structure' because he does not think that the actual structure is alright as it is. But this is not how I see it. The naive and foundational metaphysicians are engaged in complementary activities. Both are concerned to describe the world, but the naive metaphysician wishes to describe the world of appearance while the foundational metaphysician is concerned to describe the world of reality.

It is also rather hard to understand what sense of 'better' Strawson could have had in mind in allowing that an alternative structure of thought, for the revisionary metaphysician, might be better than the actual structure. If it is better then it is presumably better for some purpose. But no ordinary purpose is involved in favoring one structure of thought as opposed to another is involved; and it is hard to see what else the purpose might be unless it is already understood in metaphysical terms. Thus I would be happy to say that one structure is better than another in so far as it is closer to how things really are. But then the reference to one structure being better than another and the implicit relativity to purpose are completely idle. One might just as well have said that the revisionary metaphysician is concerned to describe things as they really are.

A similar problem besets the distinction in Carnap [1950] between internal and external questions. An external question - in its only clear, practical, sense - is the question of whether to accept a certain linguistic framework. But to what end? Carnap suggests some answers but, in most if not all of the cases he discusses, there is no real practical question of whether to accept the linguistic framework and the only way to make sense of what might be meaningfully involved in the choice of a given framework is by appeal to those very metaphysical features which he was at such pains to avoid.

We should also distinguish naive metaphysics from the metaphysics of ordinary language, even though the end results may be much the same. For the metaphysics of natural language is to be discerned by attempting to explain our use of natural language. We may wish to know, for example, whether that-clauses in belief sentences refer and, if they do, then to what. But the method of naive metaphysics is not tied to language in this way. We may ask our questions *in* natural language, of course, but it is not *about* natural language except in so far as language itself belongs to the world of appearance. It may sometimes be impossible to avoid questions of language, as it true to some extent in all subjects, but the very questions it asks are not themselves about language any more than they are about the structure of thought.

There is also some resemblance - perhaps more in extension than conception - between my distinction between naive and foundational metaphysics, on the one hand, and the distinction in Sellars [1962] between the manifest and scientific image, on the other hand. One major point of difference is that there is nothing in my conception of foundational metaphysics which requires one to take science as opposed to our common sense world as real. For me, the distinction between naive and foundational metaphysics cuts cross the distinction between the manifest and the scientific image and, in the case of either image, we can enquire into its nature, without regard to its reality, or ask about its reality. It is, of course, common in this scientific age to take the facts which belong to the scientific image to be real and the facts which belong to the manifest image to be mere appearance.

But this is not built into the very conception of reality and there is nothing in principle to prevent us from adopting the opposite instrumentalist point of view in which it is the ordinary facts which are real and the scientific facts which are mere appearance.

### §7 Conclusion

The paper has been a plea for naive metaphysics, both as an object of study in its own right and as an essential prolegomena to the study of foundational metaphysics. We need to see the appearances for what they are in themselves before considering what the reality behind them might be. We are like naturalists observing the ripples on a the pond but also wishing to know what lies beneath the surface. It is only by first studying the ripples more carefully - seeing how they begin or spread out or coalesce - that we can form any reasonable view as to their cause.

### References

- Carnap R. [1950] 'Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4, 20-40; reprinted in the Supplement to 'Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic', enlarged edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- Fine K., [1994] 'Essence and Modality', in 'Philosophical Perspectives' 8 (ed. J. Tomberlin), the Nous Casteneda Memorial Lecture, 1-16; reprinted in 'The Philosopher's Annual for 1994', volume 16, (ed. P. Grim), Stanford: CSLI; also translated and reprinted in 'Itinerarii Logico-Filosofice: Omagiu Cornel Popa' ('Logical and Philosophical Itineraries: Festschrift for Professor Cornel Popa'), (eds. V. Muresan & M. Dumitru), Bucharest Publishing House, 2004, pp. 201-14.
- Fine K., [2001] 'The Question of Realism', *Imprint*, vol. 1, no. 1; reprinted in 'Individuals, Essence and Identity: Themes of Analytic Philosophy' (eds. A. Bottani, M Carrara, P. Giaretta), Dordrecht: Kluwer 2002, 3- 41.
- Fine [2009] 'The Question of Ontology', in 'Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology' (ed. D. Chalmers, D. Manley, R. Wassermann), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 157-77.
- Fine K., [2012] 'What is Metaphysics?' in 'Contemporary Aristotelian Metaphysics' (ed. T. Tahko), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 8-25.
- Lowe J., [2002] 'A Survey of Metaphysics', Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schaffer J., [2009] 'On What Grounds What', chapter 12 of 'Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology' (ed. D. Chalmers, D. Manley, R. Wassermann), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 347-83.
- Sellars W., [1962] 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy*, Robert Colodny (ed.), Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 35–78
- Sider T., [2011] 'Writing the Book of the World', Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strawson P. F. [1959] 'Individuals', London: Methuen.
- van Inwagen P., [1990] 'Material Beings', Ithaca: Cornell University Press.